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EARLY LOCKEFORD

by Ralph Lea & Janice Roth

The credit for starting the town of Lockeford comes down to one person, Dean Jewett Locke who was born on April 16, 1823 in Langdon, New Hampshire. At the age of 17 Dean was teaching school and later served as principal for three years before attending classes at Harvard Medical School.

With the news of the California Gold Fields, Dean joined his friends as a doctor in the Boston & Newton Joint Stock Association. This group of 26 men left Boston April 15, 1849, arriving in Shingle Springs, California five months later. Dean's brother, Elmer Locke, left Boston about the same time on the steamer "Sweden" and journeyed around Cape Horn arriving in San Francisco six weeks earlier than Dean.

The brothers mined gold for a while then Dr. Dean Locke set up a tent in Sacramento City for medical practice while also mining claims on the American River. Elmer visited Staples Ferry on the Mokelumne River, a mile northwest of the future town of Lockeford. William Nichols and David J. Staples of the Boston & Newton Co. were now owners of the John Laird Ferry on the San Jose Stockton-Sutters Fort Trail.

On the last day of 1850 the Locke Brothers purchased 320 acres of the Andres Pico Mexican Grant from Staples for $1.00 an acre. The youngest Locke brother, George, joined Elmer and Dean in early 1852

▲ *Looking northwest at corner of Main Street and Elliott Road; Geo. Hartwell store on right, the Ambrose Store in center.*

▲ *Dr. George Locke and wife Estelle in front of the Livery Stable.* *Photo courtesy of S.J. County Historical Society*

on the Locke Ranch where they began farming. Dr. Locke helped organize a school at Staples Ranch in 1854.

The doctor returned to Boston and on May 8, 1855 married Miss Delia Marcella Hammond, his former student. The newlyweds journeyed back to California in the company of Dr. Locke's father, Luther. A small frame house and a cabin were built on the Locke farm. The Locke's had a ford on the Mokelumne River which the people used when the water was not high.

In 1856 Lockeford's first store was built by Luther Locke and was called the White House. Two years later Dr. D.J. Locke built a two story adobe building with the ground floor to be used as a granary and the second floor to be used as a public hall, church and during the Civil War, an armory.

In 1859, John A. Clapp built a large house for a hotel and moved it into the future town of Lockeford where it became The Lockeford House. Mr. Pelton started a blacksmith shop and Mr. Vane, a wheelwright, was now in business. In the following years S.P Sabin built a house and a blacksmith shop while W.D. Read established a wagon shop.

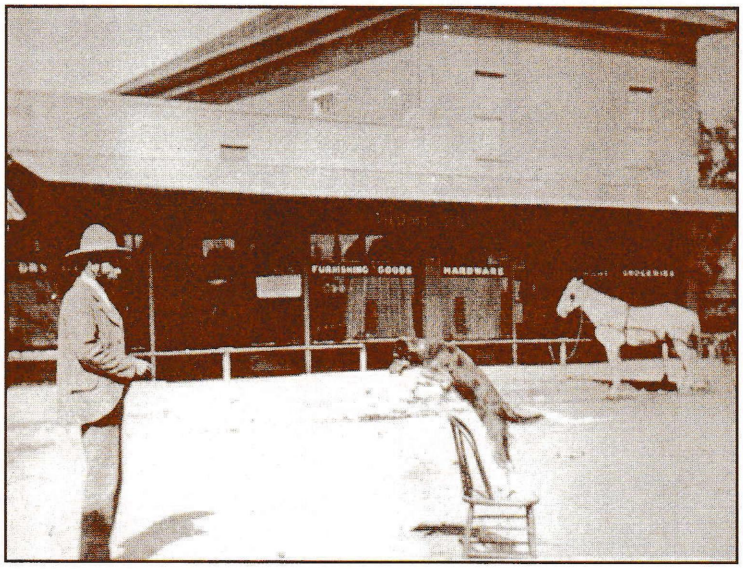
Dr. Locke, who had very strong feelings against drinking alcohol, started a temperance group called Dashaways, which later became The Sons of Temperance.

Early in 1862, Dr. D.J. Locke decided it was time to survey the new town. Assisted by W.P. Blakeslee, teacher, and Mr. Bruback, the platting and layout were completed on June 14, 1862. A year later Lockeford had its first U.S. Post Office.

Dr. Locke laid out plans for a great town free of alcohol and a home for God fearing people. He thought large and began his plan by switching from the adobe brick he had been using to the more durable bricks. He employed Chinese workers to fire the new bricks that were first used to add a facade to the adobe granary.

Dr. Locke saw a need for commercial navigation on the Mokelumne River. In February of 1862 he took a small boat down river to check for obstructions. Finding good conditions he chartered the 110 foot "Fanny Ann" to bring goods and passengers from San Francisco to Lockeford. It arrived at Woodbridge on February 21, 1862, after a nine day voyage, where it unloaded goods and passengers. The captain would go no further upstream determining it was to unsafe. Locke again went to San Francisco to procure another steamer which he would purchase upon its arrival at Lockeford Landing. The "Pert" arrived at 11:00 AM on April 5, 1862. Locke started the Mokelumne River Steam Navigation Co. Ed Foster served as President, D.J. Locke as secretary and George S. Locke served as treasurer. The "Pert" was purchased for $4000.00 and made several trips during the next two years including trips to Atheran's Bridge for the Lone Star Mill. By 1864 the boat was no longer in operation.

The Civil War had some effect on Lockeford when the Soldiers Aid Society was formed and the Mokelumne Light Dragoons organized and met in Locke's Hall. In 1864 the octagonal school house, built seven years earlier half-way between Staples Ranch and Lockeford, was now



▲ *Dr. George Locke and his dog in front of the Bruml Building.*
Photo courtesy of S.J. County Historical Society

moved to grounds provided by the good doctor near the new population center.

The next year Moses Bruml built his brick store and the first rooms were completed for the new brick home of Dr. & Delia Locke. The couple raised their 13 children in their new 22 room home. All but two of their children attended college. Two became civil engineers, six were trained to be teachers (only 3 actually taught), one was a nurse, one earned masters degree in music and three became farmers. It was probably overwhelming for the townspeople to have such a formidable family in their midst.

Dr. Locke donated a lot for the new Methodist Church. Seven years later the cornerstone was laid for the Congregational Church which had been organized earlier.

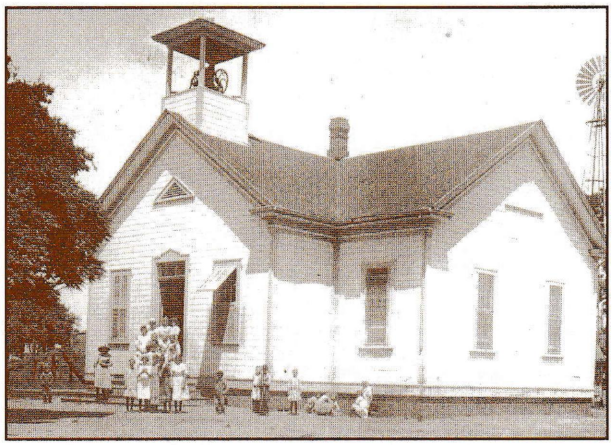
In 1867 the I.O.O.F. started meeting on the second floor of the Bruml Store. The Good Templars, organized three years earlier, also met there.

Luther Locke, father of D. J., Elmer and George, died in 1866 leaving the Doctor in charge of the store and taking the job as Postmaster.

The growth of Lockeford and the surrounding areas in the 1870's brought competition in business and encouraged new businesses to be established and others to expand.

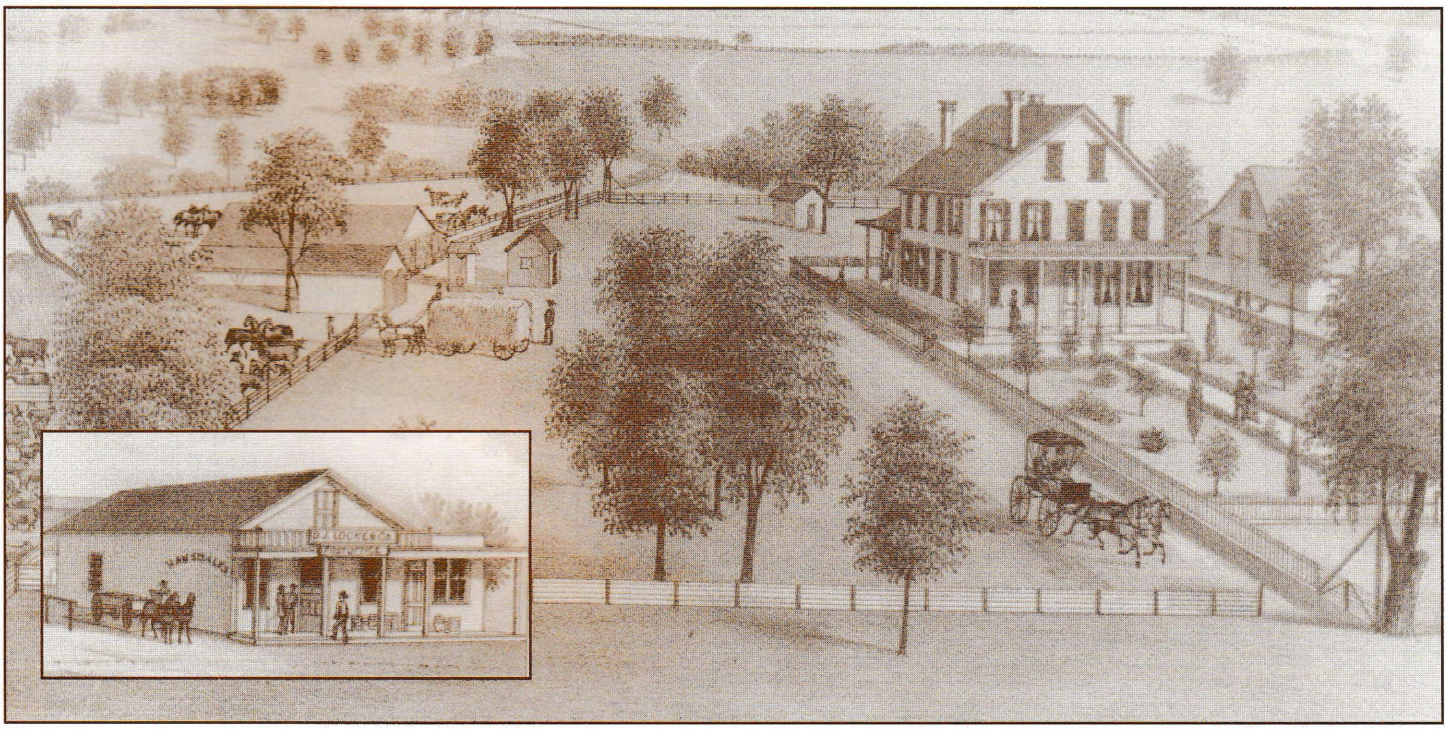
In 1871 the town of Lockeford had two general merchandise stores, one owned by Moses Bruml and the other by D.J. Locke; a butcher, W.D. Smith; two blacksmiths, Philip Cahill and Robert Taylor; a harness maker, James Brown; a boat maker & shoemaker, George Rygal; a hotel operator, R.L. Patton; a saloon operator, Jeremiah Cotton; wagon makers, Benjamin Wallace, E.W. Kellogg, and Jonathan Andrews and three physicians & surgeons, E.N. Foote, E.D.Walker and D.J. Locke.

By 1874 the local school ran out of space



The Lockeford School, built in 1874 on D.J. Locke property, still stands today as the Community Center. ▲
Photo courtesy of S.J. County Historical Society

The Luther J. Locke Building, built in 1885 in Lockeford, is a meat market with a home on the top floor. ▲



Inset: D.J. Locke's store.

Lockeford residence and farm of D.J. Locke. ▲

▲ *The Special arrives from Stockton & Lodi unloading at the Lockeford Lumber Co., near Locke's Grove, for the Lockeford May Day Picnic.*
Photo courtesy of S.J. Cty. Historical Society

▲ *The Priestleys, owners of the Lockeford Drug Store, at the May Day Picnic.*

▶ *Traffic enroute to the May Day Picnic along Jack Tone Road.*

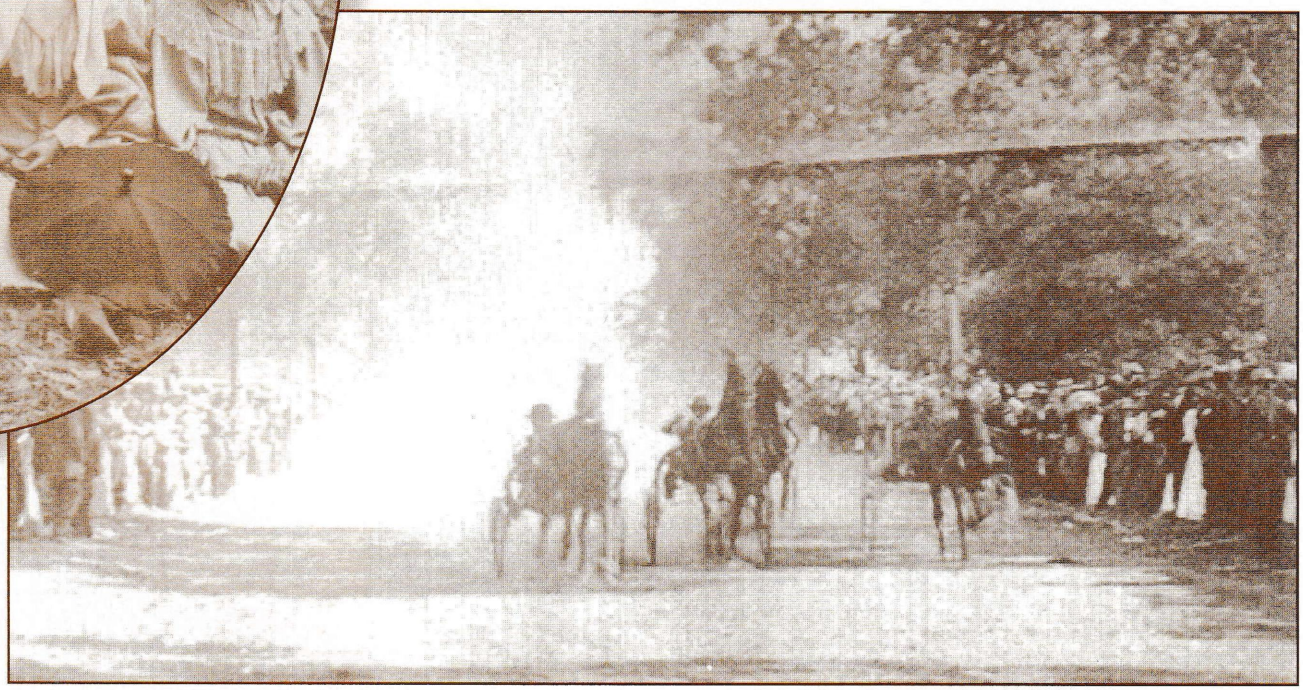
◀ *Lockeford*

Making and selling popcorn at the Lockeford Picnic. ▲
(l to r): Unknown, Unknown, Henry Wisner, Emeros Wisner and Unknown.

◄

May 1896, Lockeford Good Templars Picnic.
(l to r): Ora Anderson, Madie Anderson, Ora Pixley, Rella Copper, May Holmes, and Edith Ivory.

The racing scene at the annual Lockeford Picnic. ▼



nic.

▲ *1890; Moses Bruml Store and building in Lockeford. The son was Julius. (The Bruml family pictured.)*

and decided to build. Rather than buy a large lot from Dr. Erastus N. Foote for $250.00 they elected to stay on the Locke property and build a new school for $2,465.00. Two years later the St. Joachim Mission Church organized and moved into a store building. The United Brethern Church started about the same time.

The 1878 directory saw some changes as wagons were built in J. P. Grants factory that employed nine men; George G. Stacy and G. W. Owens were also wagon makers with Owens also serving as Justice of the Peace; George Ringer was constable; J. H. Haley was a harness and saddle maker; Cotton, Evans and Rogers each operated a saloon; Bruml had added a drugstore; and A.A. Cudner was the first architect.

On June 4 of 1882 a fire destroyed Stacey's carriage factory as well as the livery stable and the saloon owned by Caldwell and Starkey. This was the same fire that young George Locke, later a veterinarian, received face burns that scared his face. He was always seen with a beard in later life. In rebuilding, Benjamin Steacy erected a two story brick building that became the I.O.O.F. Hall upstairs and commercial shops on the ground floor.

In 1881 Dr. Locke built a brick building on the north west corner of Main Street and Locust Lane. The top floor was used as the new town hall and later converted to a skating rink. The ground floor replaced the old Locke store located across the street.

At the same time the large Locke Warehouse was built on the right-of-way of the narrow gauge railroad. The San Joaquin & Sierra Nevada, ran from Bracks Landing in the delta through Woodbridge, Lodi and ending at Valley Springs. Dr. Locke donated land for a depot and the track through Lockeford. J. M. LaRue and James Boag also built a grain warehouse along the railroad.

The train was a big boost to the local economy. Buildings were needed for the storing of goods and crops that were to be shipped on the rails. The Lockeford May Day Picnic, held in the Locke Oak Grove on the southern edge of town, was able to greatly expand with a trainload of picnickers from Stockton and Lodi. G. F. Glover was the agent for the S.J.& S.N.R.R..

The town was changing in other ways. The Lockeford Hotel offered as hair-dresser M. Solomon; Miss S.L. Carrol was a dressmaker and Mrs. L.E. Chad had a millinery shop; a new restaurant was opened by Mr. Day and Mr. J. Fenn. The later also operated a hotel. The Live Oak Hotel was operated by T. Ostrander, proprietor.

The White Fawn Saloon was opened by owners Evans and Moore, while J.S. & T.S. O'Keefe opened another saloon, but they were outdone by Starkey & Duffy in their Palace Livery Stable & Saloon.

▲ *1905 Lockeford baseball team. James Hammond, bat boy, with Dan Marceau, Homer Clow, Allan Daley, Melvin Carey, Gus and Jim Sanguinetti, Prince Athearn, Will Priestley, Bill Proctor was a relief pitcher, unknown.*

The wagon, harness and saddle makers were going strong. Benjamin Steacy had a crew of ten men working in his blacksmith and carriage factory. J. P. Grant, T. Gehan, F. McClelland, G. Owens, Arthur Tretheway and T. H. Daley were all independent carriage and wagon makers making Lockeford a center for the making of carriages and wagons.

In 1882, Dr. Locke sold his store to Warren B. Ambrose, the former principal of Lockeford School District who also became the local postmaster. Hosea Stamper was the next agent for the railroad and William Palmer became the proprietor of the Bryant House Hotel. N. H. Locke became owner of the Locke's Warehouse.

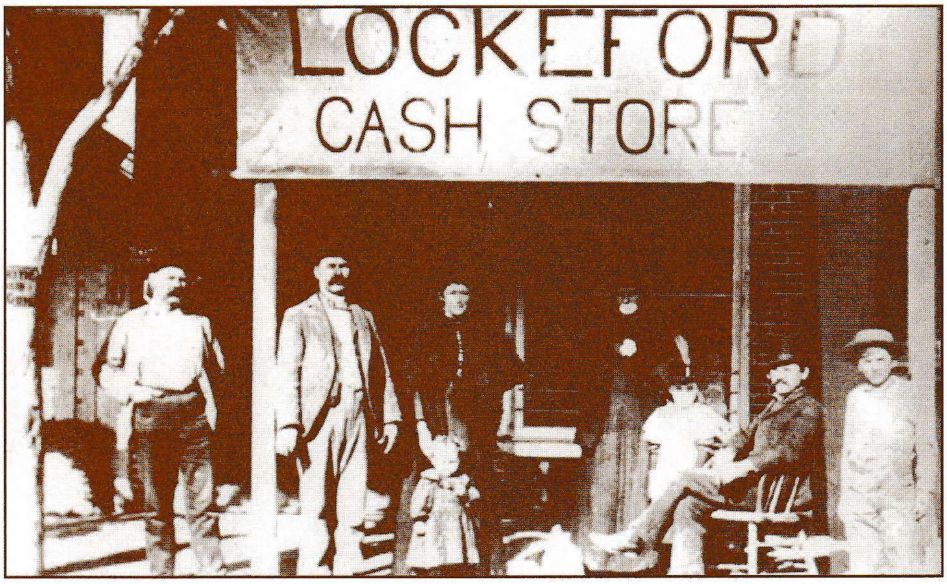
An accident with a runaway horse in March of 1886 left Dr. Locke unable to use his legs.

Dr. Locke and his oldest granddaughter attended the Lockeford Picnic on May 1, 1887. It was unseasonably cold weather for the picnic. Within three days Dr. Locke had developed pneumonia and died. Lockeford lost its founder who had given generously of his land for a school and several churches. He was a physician, merchant, farmer, postmaster and a member of the school board.

By the 1890's the town of Lockeford was doing fine. It boasted over 400 inhabitants. The second brass band was formed. Two additional light wagon shops and two carriage/painting shops were just starting. James Coil went from carpenter to variety store owner. Luther Locke had a new brick building to house the Lockeford Meat Market which had living quarters upstairs. The Women's Christian Temperance Union started a free reading room. Amos Coffman opened a tailor shop and Miss Hannah Locke was teaching music to the children.

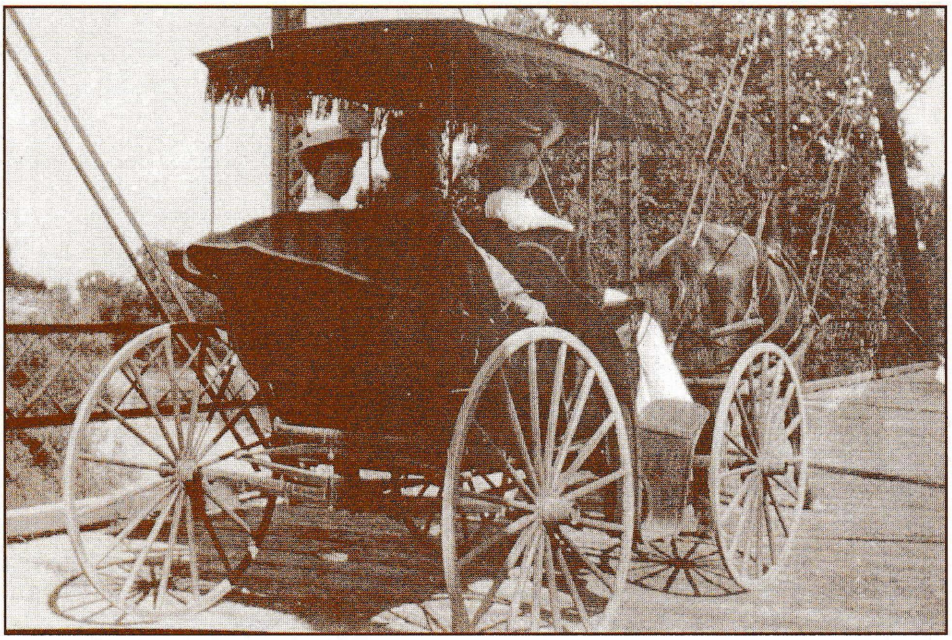
It would be 1898 before an attempt was made to bring a newspaper to Lockeford. The "Lockeford Eagle" had a short life and it would be another 15 years before the second newspaper was published in Lockeford.

By 1900 the town of Lockeford had lost most of the wagon and carriage makers. The population was stable with nearby farming the primary business.



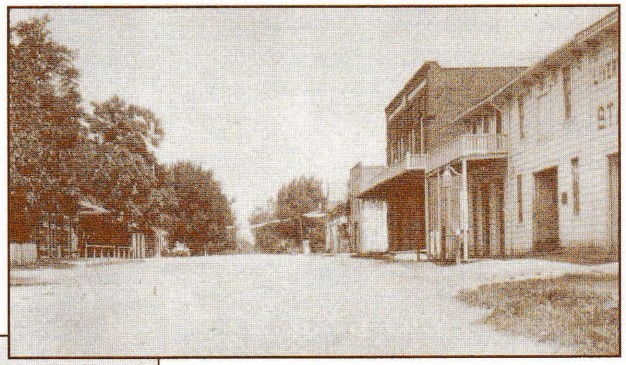
▲ *Lockeford Cash Store; Duncan McLean, Lou McLean, Verna McLean, Dr. Joseph G. Priestley, Luther Locke and Albert Hart.* *Photo courtesy of S.J. County Historical Society*

Lockeford, 1915; Ambrose Store and Telephone Office. ▲ *W. B. Ambrose, owner and Bernice Weber, bookkeeper.*
Photo courtesy of S.J. County Museum

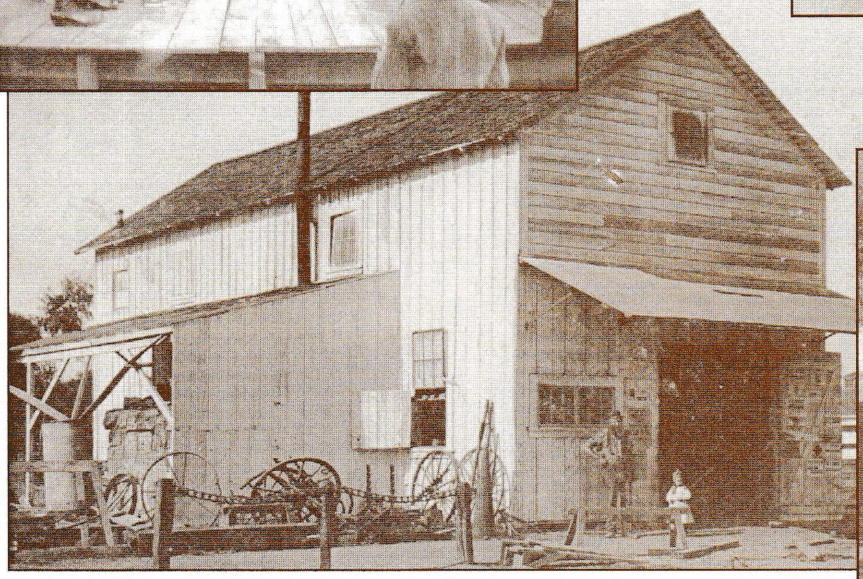


▲ *The Lockeford Bridge on the Mokelumne.*

◄ *The Lockeford Band.*



► *Main Street in Lockeford; Locke's Livery Stable and I.O.O.F. building on right.*
Photo courtesy of S.J. County Historical Society



▲ *Fred Figgie's blacksmith shop in Lockeford.*

Bruml Bros., Henry & Julius' store, their father died in 1901. They sold dry goods, hardware, furniture and groceries. ▼

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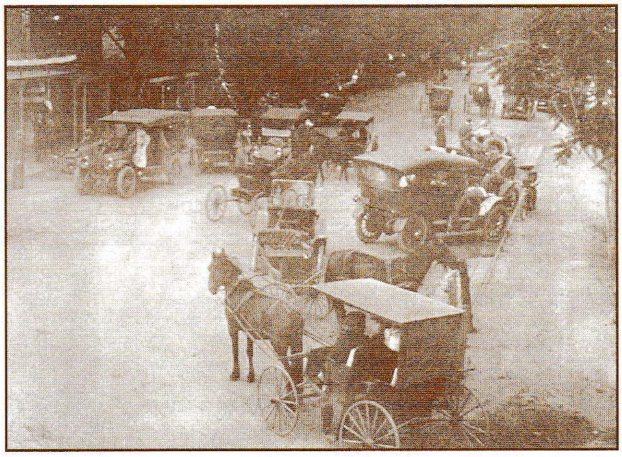
The following buildings in this article may be seen in Lockeford today.

- The D.J. Locke House & Granary at 19960 Elliott Road (now a Bed & Breakfast Inn)
- Locke's Warehouse now occupied by Winn Trucking
- The I.O.O.F Hall at the southwest corner of Main & Cotton
- The butcher shop at the southwest corner of Highway 88 and Elliott (Locust Ave.)
- Store built by Dr. Locke at the northwest corner of Highway 88 and Elliott (Locust Ave)
- School built in 1874 at Jack Tone Road (Bruml Road) near the edge of town



▲ *Traffic on Main Street in Lockeford.*
Photo courtesy of S.J. County Historical Society

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